United Nations A/C.1/53/9

General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 October 1998
English
Original: Russian

Fifty-third session
First Committee
Agenda item 64
Maintenance of international security – prevention of the violent disintegration of States

Letter dated 27 October 1998 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the statement made by a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation at a press briefing on 23 October 1998 on the question of the withdrawal of the Russian military formations temporarily stationed in the territory of the Republic of Moldova (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex distributed as a document of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly under agenda item 64.

(*Signed*) Sergei **Lavrov**

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Annex

Statement by a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation at a press briefing on the question of the withdrawal of the Russian military formations temporarily stationed in the territory of the Republic of Moldova

We have carefully studied the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, timed to coincide with the fourth anniversary of the signing of the Agreement between Russia and Moldova on the legal status, procedure and timing of the withdrawal of the military formations of the Russian Federation temporarily stationed in the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

We must note first of all that this statement does not adequately reflect the true position in connection with the implementation of the Agreement. Although the Agreement has not in fact been ratified by the State Duma, it is a matter of common record that the leaders of the Russian Federation have repeatedly affirmed their adherence to this document and have acted in accordance with it. In particular, over the past few years the strength of the operational group of Russian forces in Moldova has been reduced by a factor of two and a half: from 6,500 to 2,600 men, 500 of whom are Russian peacemakers. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Moldova is of course aware of this, but it informs the public that "only insignificant progress has been made with the withdrawal of the troops", and it does not cite any figures in this connection.

The statement is also silent on a key provision of the 1994 Agreement that the withdrawal of the Russian troops from Moldova depends directly on progress in solving the problem of the Dniester region. Article 3 of the Agreement states that the practical steps for withdrawal of the troops will be synchronized with the political settlement of the problem of the Dniester region and the determination of the region's status. The conflict has not of course been settled, and the region's status has still not been determined. In the circumstances, the hasty withdrawal of the remaining extremely small group of Russian troops, which is a factor in the region's stability, might cause tensions to become exacerbated again and even a renewal of the conflict extinguished in 1992. Fearing such a development, the leaders and people of the region are even today protesting against the withdrawal of the remaining Russian soldiers and their weapons. Apparently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Moldova does not wish to take this into account.

It is further proposed that Russia should bring the 1994 Agreement into force by a decree of the Russian Government (without ratification). However, the internal State procedures necessary for the entry into force of international agreements are conducted not by arbitrary decisions but in accordance with the internal legislation of each State. In Russia, these procedures provide for ratification.

The intention referred to in the Moldovan statement to link the bilateral question of the Russian troops in Moldova with ratification by Kishinev of the adapted multilateral Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe is obviously counter-productive. It will hardly be understood by any of the parties to the Treaty.